

## Andrew Jackson to John Coffee, December 31, 1813, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### TO JOHN COFFEE.

Fort Strother, December 31, 1813. "11 oclock at night."

*Dr. Sir:* I recd. your letter this evening by express, the contents observed, in reply you will find inclosed the address aluded to, and I wish you to have them immediately published with my address to the volunteer infantry, which I herewith also inclose.

Believing as I did that the militia were in for the campaign or six months, and finding that the governor in his of the 7th. and 15th. stated that the[y] were detached for 6 months, hearing that they were determined to march of without leave on the morning of the 4th. January I had notified all officers of my information, and ordered them to be ready at their posts to keep down mutiny and I was determined at all hazards to prevent them untill this evening, when I recd. a letter of date the 26th instant from the governor giving his opinion that they were only to serve but three months, but he had no power as the[y] were in the service of the united states to discharge them, that power being vested in the President, but that it would promote the Publick good; with all such damd. milk and water observations, which is well calculated to raise mutiny in the minds of the men, keep their good oppinion of himself, and throw the responsibility on me. I will disappoint him. I say to them if the governor who is my superior will take no responsibility on himself, I of course being a subordinate officer can give no discharge, that I am under the immediate orders of Genl Pinckney, and the orders to discharge must come from him to him from the President, that I am ordered to advance with all the force under my command and to cooperate with the Georgia Troops, that I cannot risque the responsibility of consenting to

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let them go, but from the letter of the Governor, I will not hazard the step to prevent them by force. I am compelled by my orders from genl Pinckney to keep the ground I obtain, that a regular campaign and the conquest and Possession of the country inhabited by the Hostile creeks are the objects of government, and I cannot consent untill ordered to let one man depart, and have ordered Colo Hays not to muster a single man out of service untill ordered by the goverment, or by the express orders of the Governor. he has wrote some of the most extraordinary letters you ever read.

I have exerted every nerve to progress with the campaign, and as soon as I get over one dificulty another presents itself or is raised, by the meaning and u[n]meaning expressions of the governor, the mutiny of the Troops, all occasioned by the underhanded designs of officers who wish to raise their popularity on my downfall. Genl Roberts on 5th. instant under my order went to his Brigade to bring up the deficiency of his Brigade.<sup>1</sup> he brought on 191 men within two miles of head quarters, as he reports who had tendered there service for three months, was mustered into service as he reports for three months, and which was halted, untill the general (mark me after they had been mustered) came in to make a bargain with me that they should not be held to service for a longer time than that for which they were engaged. the proposition at once convinced me he had been holding out or some person else false coulourings with respect to my having become a tyrant another pledge wanted that the three months should stand for a tour of duty that they should be paid was another.

<sup>1</sup> See Patton, Harris, and Pickens to Jackson, Feb. 2, 1814, *post*.

I replied I had no power to keep them longer if volunteers than their engagement, that If drafted Militia the law decided the question, that I knew no law that authorised a volunteer tender of three months, of course could not be responsible for the pay, and after reflecting on the subject sent them an address containing a plain and candid statement of what I would do, that is they should be discharged at the end of their engagement, that I would with all my endeavour and influence procure that they should be paid, but not having any

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control over the government could not Pledge myself for the payment, and their services, I accepted with pleasure, they had been mustered and marched, they were in the service whether I accepted or did not accept, but I made the address to set aside all objections. It was sent and read to them and the Genl ordered to march them in. He returned after following them 20 miles without effecting any thing. he sees instead of getting me into difficulties he has got himself and these men I have ordered him after them, and authorised him to call on any force in the service of the united states in the county of madison on the state of Tennessee that he may think necessary to arrest confine and bring (the officers by name) in close custody and confinement the officers and men composing said detachment etc etc etc. This I think will bring the citizens and soldiers to their senses, and the Genl too. for it is stated, but with what truth I cannot say, that he has under the rose been saying a good many things, and that it was necessary that these Pledges should be made by me etc etc or they need not Join and that they were halted out of the lines for that purpose that the[y] swore they were not going to be entrapped etc. Capt Davis came in and reported himself last night, he is greatly alarmed and distressed and is gone after his company. The officers must be made examples of. more of this hereafter when we meet.

you must recollect to have noted in the paper that the Pledges of those worthy companions of the worthy Colo. Alcorn under his and their hands is Published, the names of those brave men who have staid must be named, to save them from the eternal disgrace that awaits these honourable men who thought the[y] were fast damning you and myself by defeating the campaign. My order to you recognises the Pledge given that directs you to let them go to their homes. I inclose you a copy least you may not have the original with you and it must be Published in the same paper and following the Pledges. This will prove to the world that the indulgence given was founded on the consideration of the Pledge, and it formed a new engagement, that bound the whole for the campaign leaving out of view the old engagement or the law.

any of the officers who can raise companies for six months or the campaign and in case the governor will not act, for three months but if the men can be got for a longer time than

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three months as few of the latter as possible you will detach on that service. The officers that have staid will receive pay untill the secratary of war discharges them, this he will not do untill the expiration of the service of twelve months, or the expiration of the two years, and I fear the men will loose their pay and the Capt. be sued for the arms they have recd.

on the subject of supplies, I have no information except from your quarter the prospect brightens at Fort Deposit, and I have sent Baxter up to stay at roses [Ross's] and send on the provisions on that rout. I expect 400 barrels of flower and corn meal at Fort Deposit by the 4th. of next month. This McGee is bound for, but I wish them all to be inspected or marked and I will have them inspected here, he has delivered here flower and meal condemned at highwasee.

So soon as supplies can be had I wish you to order up all the force. four or five hundred horsemen could do great deal of service and there are as young Chenubee tells me a great deal of corn at the Fish pond Towns<sup>2</sup> which are abandoned by the creeks. I have had a detachment out for some days. I expect them in tomorrow from their stay I hope they will bring in hair. Lashley and Chenebee sent me a scalp the other day, and the red sticks are so situated that if we had supplies we could cut them up entirely if there is 1000 horse after these militia all go we could

2 On the Tallapoosa, above Oakfuskee.

play the Devill with the creeks, and they militia I think will go, and I wish they and they volunteers had a smoke tail in their teeth, with a Peticoat as a coat of mail to hand down to there offspring.<sup>3</sup>

3 In the usage of the time to send a man a petticoat was to accuse him of cowardice. Col. John Williams writing to Jackson, Jan. 22, 1814, said, "I am mortified to hear of Col. Lillard's conduct. It is disgraceful in the extreme. A petty coat ought to be presented to him".

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As soon as supplies of breadstuff is on, bring up the rear with all you can get and we will make a noble push. Tell these three months men or two months men we are in a Just world and the[y] cannot think but a Just government will pay their brave soldiary. I think of all damnd Rascals I ever saw, is some of the Holston soldiers, nothing can escape them I keep no copies of letters. We have not sleep three hours in four nights. Reed and myself are worn out where is Searcy that he has not come on, say to him we want him up as early as he can ride. Major Winston with all his men you must bring on with you. Say to the Brave Madisonians as the volunteers of Tennessee has disgraced themselves, I hope they will aid in supporting the sinking charec[tor] of the State. With best wishes adieu.

*Mark* Inclosed is the original orders and addresses. I wish them carefully preserved, altho I have copies of them.

P. S. as soon as the scout returns if they effect any thing I shall forward the information by express. horsemen of suffici[ent] force could by scouting distroy a great many indians, the campaign, must progress, at all hazards I must keep this fort untill ordered by Pinckney to retrograde. When more at leisure and my head more at ease I shall write more enteligably. I am fearfull you will not be able to read or understand it, but I am compelled to send it to you as it is.